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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1503
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE
RUMIAAA/USOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/COMSOUTH IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR JTF-BRAVO IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: MICHELETTI ANNOUNCES LEAVE OF ABSENCE

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 51

[1](#)B. 09 TEGUCIGALPA 1189

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. De facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti announced on January 21 that he would take a leave of absence from his public duties effective immediately. Micheletti said his decision was prompted by his concern for the good of the country. He said he wanted to avoid standing in the way of president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo being able to effectively govern from the beginning of his administration. Micheletti called on the international community to support the Lobo administration so that Lobo can carry out the development that Honduras deserves. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) De facto regime leader Roberto Micheletti announced on a January 21 morning talk show that in order to provide peace and tranquility to the Honduran population and to provide space for the incoming administration of president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo, he would take a leave of absence similar to the one he took before the November 29 general election (reftel B). Micheletti explicitly stated that this was not a resignation. Micheletti said the last meeting of the de facto cabinet would be held on January 21 and that he would vacate the Executive Office Building on January 21 and not attend any public events until Lobo's inauguration on January 27. Micheletti said he would attend a private Catholic Mass on inauguration day. In response to the interviewer's question of whether this action would please the international community, Micheletti responded that he did not care about the international community's opinion, just as he had not been interested in it during the last seven months. He added that the international community had said Honduras would die of hunger (Note: due to the termination of donor assistance), but owing to God it had the best production of basic grains.

[1](#)3. (U) In a televised address the evening of January 21 at which he was accompanied by his wife and all members of the de facto regime cabinet seated around a conference table, Micheletti stated that he had decided to take a leave of absence from his public duties as president of the country effective immediately in order to allow president-elect Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo to effectively begin to govern, not stand in his way, and allow greater recognition of the Lobo administration by the international community. Micheletti said he made the decision for the good of the country. Micheletti called on the international community, including the international financial institutions, to support the Lobo administration so that Lobo can carry out the development that Honduras deserves. Micheletti recognized that the situation Lobo inherits is atypical and urged Hondurans to keep this in mind during the Lobo administration's first

months in office.

¶4. (U) In his speech to the nation, Micheletti said it is a sacred honor to defend and uphold democracy and the law and that he accepted the position of president in order to carry out those duties. Micheletti said that today in Honduras democracy and respect for civil liberties reign and it is now clear that the constitution and laws must be respected by all Hondurans. He added that Honduras showed the world that it was the little country that could, repeating a catch phrase of the pro-regime civil movement. Micheletti said the greatest success of his tenure was the holding of free and transparent elections on November 29, 2009 for which there was high voter turnout.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: We believe Micheletti's decision to step aside was prompted by a second round of prudential U.S. visa revocations on January 15 and 18. While he lashed out at the international community several times in his morning interview, his speech to the nation was measured and respectful. The resignation comes too late to please most of the international community, but does at least remove Micheletti from the inauguration process, giving the president-elect some space to begin anew.

HENSHAW